

3 telecommunications medium to transmit user information between the telephone  
4 switch and the data network, and a gateway coupled to the access server and  
5 the telephone switch via an out-of-band communications medium to transmit  
6 signaling information between the telephone switch and the access server, a  
7 method, comprising:

8 a) sending a (continuity check message) from the gateway to the access  
9 server; and

10 b) sending a continuity check result message from the access server to  
11 the gateway.

1 13. (New) The method of claim 12, further comprising sending a continuity check  
2 result acknowledgment message from the gateway to the access server in  
3 response to sending a continuity check result message from the access server to  
4 the gateway.

1 14. (New) In a network architecture comprising a telephone switch, an access  
2 server coupled to a data network and the telephone switch via a  
3 telecommunications medium to transmit user information between the telephone  
4 switch and the data network, and a gateway coupled to the access server and  
5 the telephone switch via an out-of-band communications medium to transmit  
6 signaling information between the telephone switch and the access server, a  
7 apparatus, comprising:

8 means for sending a status message from the access server to the  
9 gateway; and  
10 means acknowledging to the access server that the status message was  
11 received.

1 15. (New) The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the means for sending a status  
2 message from the access server to the gateway comprises means for sending a  
3 status message from the access server to the gateway that indicates the access  
4 server is operational.

1 16. (New) The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the means for sending a status  
2 message from the access server to the gateway comprises means for sending a  
3 status message from the access server to the gateway that specifies the  
4 capabilities of the access server.

1 17. (New) The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the means for acknowledging to  
2 the access server that the status message was received comprises means for  
3 sending a status acknowledgement message from the gateway to the access  
4 server that indicates the status message was received.

1 18. (New) The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the means for sending a status  
2 acknowledgement message from the gateway to the access server that indicates

3 the status message was received comprises means for sending a status  
4 acknowledgement message from the gateway to the access server that indicates  
5 the status message was received and that the gateway allows the access server  
6 to receive calls.

1 19. (New) The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the means for sending a status  
2 acknowledgement message from the gateway to the access server that indicates  
3 the status message was received comprises means for sending a status  
4 acknowledgement message from the gateway to the access server that indicates  
5 the status message was received and that the gateway allows the access server  
6 to generate calls.

1 20. (New) In a network architecture comprising a telephone switch, an access  
2 server coupled to a data network and the telephone switch via a  
3 telecommunications medium to transmit user information between the telephone  
4 switch and the data network, and a gateway coupled to the access server and  
5 the telephone switch via an out-of-band communications medium to transmit  
6 signaling information between the telephone switch and the access server, an  
7 article of manufacture comprising:  
8 a computer usable medium having computer readable program code  
9 means embodied therein comprising:

10 computer readable program means for sending a status message

11 from the access server to the gateway; and

12 computer readable program means acknowledging to the access

13 server that the status message was received.

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